Catholic Teaching on Abortion

The Sin of Abortion

"Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person — among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2270).

"Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law…." (CCC, n. 2271).

Direct abortion, deliberately chosen as an end or a means, is an objective mortal sin. Formal cooperation in abortion, such as encouraging someone to get an abortion, helping someone get an abortion, or paying for an abortion is also gravely immoral and a mortal sin. Direct abortion is never justified, no matter what the circumstances or intention.

"The fifth commandment forbids as gravely contrary to the moral law … direct abortion, willed as an end or as means, as well as cooperation in it." (Compendium of the Catechism, n. 470).

The sin of abortion carries with it a penalty of excommunication, but this penalty does not apply if the individual did not know, at the time, about the penalty of excommunication.

Forgiveness from Sin

If you have had an abortion, or if you helped someone get an abortion, you committed an objective mortal sin. **Any and all sins can be forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation**:

1. Examine your conscience, by comparing your choices in life to Church teaching.

2. Repent, by admitting that you knowingly chose to do some things that are wrong, and then resolve to turn away from sin and toward true love of God and neighbor.

3. Confess your sins to a priest in confession. Then you are forgiven by God.

4. You should also do penance for your sins: e.g. prayer, self-denial, works of mercy. But even without penance, your sins are forgiven.

If you are unable to go to Confession, you can obtain forgiveness immediately by making an act of **perfect contrition**: this act is usually a prayer to God, expressing true sorrow for sin, and true repentance from sin, **out of love for God**, with the resolve to avoid sin. Then go to Confession at your next opportunity.

Contrition (or repentance) is "perfect when it is motivated by love of God and imperfect if it rests on other motives." (Compendium, n. 303)

True sorrow for sin is a willing admission of guilt, and a regret, for past sins. Repentance from sin is a deliberate turning away from sin and toward the love of God and neighbor.

Pope John Paul II: "I would like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly."

"If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitely lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord."

"With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life." (The Gospel of Life, n. 99).

RachelsVineyard.org – a Catholic ministry providing hope and healing to those wounded by abortion. **Priestsforlife.org** – many pro-life resources. **Noparh.org** -- non-denominational outreach to women suffering due to abortion.